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FOR REVIEW

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A LAP FULL OF SEED

BY

MAX PLOWMAN

'Thou hast a lap full of seed,
And this is a fine country.
Why dost thou not cast thy seed,
And live in it merrily?

Shall I cast it on the sand
And turn it into fruitful land?
For on no other ground
Can I sow my seed,
Without tearing up
Some stinking weed.'

Blake.

Oxford

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TO
SYDNEY ELSIE JERROLD

NOTE

To you, kind Editors of the *Academy*, *Daily News*, *Englishwoman*, *Westminster Gazette* and *Woman at Home*, who, when I was very poor, not only printed some of these verses, but paid for them, my thanks for your hospitality and for permission to reprint.

And to you, generous folk, who spent some trouble and half a crown on 'The Golden Heresy,' my apologies for the resurrection of four of the shorter poems which appeared in that book. In the association of ideas they seemed to have a place here.

The quotations printed in small type are exclusively from the works of William Blake.

PREFACE

IT rather looks as if English poets have given up writing prefaces. The good old fashion which had fine vogue a hundred years ago seems to have disappeared, for reasons which, I think, hardly redound to our credit. Perhaps I should say reason, because timidity (often disguised as Good Form) appears to be the chief excuse for that negligence in manners which finds its expression in the casual and indifferent nod of the modern note to patronising editors, in place of the courtly bow whereby a gentleman of importance was wont to announce his presence. Perhaps the ever dwindling size of our audiences may have something to do with it. In old time poets addressed themselves to patrons and a select assembly of unprofessional readers, but nowadays a bashful writer is struck dumb by the thought that he merely enters a roomful of critics, all busy and all bored.

Hence the alternative: either to nod acquaintance and remain silent, or to harbour some portion of that energy which might more profitably have been exercised in the book itself, for special and exclusive use upon the unfortunate conscripts of letters. Sheer funk (often disguised as Good Form) has reduced the average English writer to the former manner. On the other hand, those serpent-like doves the Irish, have, in the personalities of

Mr. Shaw and Mr. Yeats, given us illustrious exhibitions in the proper use of the shillelagh as an aid to oratory.

And here, with a very low bow, I beg to offer a word of personal explanation. I am writing this preface, instead of more profitably trying to write verse, because, for the time being, the War has made the more arduous task seem impossible, though I trust it has left me with enough intelligence to plead some excuse for my existence. Moreover I flatter myself that I am able to regard the contents of this book apologetically, as nearly all these poems were written early in 1914, and a measure of employment in the British army has given me the advantage of being able to see them retrospectively.

Therefore, good Critic, (for we must all catch the ear of some dictator now) do not become enraged with me for further wasting your time, but rather believe I write this preface for your entertainment.

I know the misery of your job. I once 'did the verse.' I remember the dreary wastes of platitudinous bathos, relieved from their unspeakable flatness only by the staccato, hair-raising idiocy of the unintelligibles. I too have suffered. Nevertheless we must be patient and humane. The dullest person, if he be frank and of a merry heart, is sufferable for a few moments, provided we meet him face to face. And it is thus that I conceive this mode of address. For your especial goodwill, fond critic of my 'Bather,' (who asked, 'Why Aphrodite?') I am going to take off the frills and furbelows of poetic verbiage (you know what I mean—gentlemen well met use each other's idiom) and show you that behind a smiling face I keep a frowning providence.

Allow me then at once to forestall criticism, to attribute to you what you never said, and generally to do all those things the old prefacers begged to assure their readers they would never do, by saying I am not concerned to know whether there is any poetry in this book. Don't think me rude. We English hate rudeness as we hate French courtesy or any other show of extravagant emotion, knowing it to be Bad Form. I merely wish to direct your attention to the purpose of the author, believing you will agree that success in any art is determined by the intention of the artist.

I wrote these pieces because I had something to say. I wrote them in the forms you will find them, stumbling and clumsy and derivative as they will appear to you, not from choice but of necessity. I never wrote a single one of them because I wanted to make poetry. And all I ask is that they shall interest. If you find a single line that is really interesting I beg that you will do me the kindness of shouting your discovery at the top of your voice; for you and I know we live in loud times, when brazen voices vie with the crash of machine-made warfare in the making of bedlam: times when we can ill afford to lose an interesting line.

Now I am sure no one will be more heartily in accord with me than you, my honest Critic, when I say that to be interesting is to achieve a great deal. Let us go a little further and say that to be intensely and emotionally interesting is to achieve poetry. But criticism, tinkering with technique as if it were an art in itself, has whittled away at ways and means until nothing is accepted as poetry which cannot be made to pass through the letter

O. The unintelligibles have themselves made a corner in this field of criticism. Truth however is always beauty. Impassioned truth is always poetry; and no man ever yet attempted to tell the truth sincerely without achieving something of the nature of poetry. Only the mentally effete and the sensually blasé are more interested in the manner of their speech than in what they have to say; and for a generation it is possible that sincere writers will have to speak roughly, almost rudely, in order to arouse minds moss-grown with memory and senses barely made wakeful by brainless little verse constructed of second-hand emotions dressed up for new by fantastic craftsmanship.

But this is mere diversion. I hasten to redeem my promise. Believe me, I would not willingly enter this confessional box were it not for the fact that I should feel a swindler at large if I allowed you, my dear Critic, to go on thinking such a poem as 'The Bowman' had anything to do with Mr. Arthur Machen's friends, or was a literal description of some soldier on the Western Front. It is neither. No. Let the unvarnished truth be told.

All these verses are about sex and religion.

Horrific matters, I admit. A shock to the trained sense of Good Form. But Blake, (William Blake you remember—commonly regarded as a madman—) wrote some uncommonly interesting things about religion. I beg to assure you that he did, because the fact is not widely known. And Meredith wrote poem after poem about sex. So there are learned precedents which you cannot afford to neglect.

Someone, I forget who, (as Mr. Yeats would say) has said that every age attempts a restatement of the Christian religion. Far be it from me to make for these immodest verses any such inordinate claim. With our increasing Catholicism why should I seek the Index Expurgatorius? But I am learning that what has been considered exclusively religious experience may and should find its counterpart, nay more, its apotheosis, in normal mundane life.

Mankind postulates an ideal in some form of religion, and men strive toward the actual realisation of that ideal in every conscious effort of their lives. But while this is going on, static religion, fearful of experience, entombs man's ideal in the sacraments of the church. Yet not until the sacraments of the church are realised by daily human intercourse is their reality assured. Unrealised thus, they remain moribund substitutes for life, graveyards for the affections, drugs to lower vitality, bye-paths leading to the ' borders of Non-Entity.'

' So he who wishes to see a Vision, a perfect Whole,
Must see it in its Minute Particulars, Organized and not as thou,
O Fiend of Righteousness pretendest : thine is a Disorganized
And snowy cloud, brooder of tempests and destructive War.'

Good Critic, does this entertain you? I fear not. Let us turn to the subject of sex.

The supreme joys and the most profound mysteries of life are like perfumes which cannot be brought into the market square without defilement; but for that reason let us have no parley with the miserable or hypocritical prudes who can only understand the arts which flourish in dusty places. Unemotional statements of the facts of

sex are such obvious obscenities that the police should be empowered to prosecute their makers. Sensitive youth never hears them without shock. Yet Blake and Meredith wrote of sex in such a manner that we may grow at once wise and joyful in their company, and if I have succeeded in limping after them without offence I am content.

Of the war poems at the end of the book, your forbearance and a word. They are few, because warfare itself is comparatively unimportant: the spirit (though not the brain) of man having already outgrown the bestial occupation. They sound one note, that of individual responsibility, because from a personal standpoint I do not know another worth sounding. There remains the standpoint of nationalism. Some day I hope to write of the gulf between individual and national conscience, and how it will be bridged by the wisdom that grows with the increase of individual liberty.

And so adieu, my patient Critic. If we should meet

Where men like vermin thread the bowels of earth
And crave the certainty of ancient Hell,

I feel sure you will forgive me even my lack of Good Form when you remember that at least I never wrote a line in praise of

All the little emptiness of war.

M. P.

March, 1917.

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THE CHOICE

'Seek not thy heavenly father then beyond the skies :
There Chaos dwells and ancient Night and Og and Anak old.'

TAKE Heaven away, O God, and bury deep
Out of my sight Hell with its brood of fear;
When Thou givest Earth shall I cry, 'Heaven is dear,
Into its blissful haven would I creep'?
Take Heaven away; for lo, I need Thee near,
And should I stretch my eyes they cannot peep
Into so fierce a light it seems asleep,
Lying across death's yet untraversed mere.

Keep Heaven, O God; and to the Devil his Hell;
But give me sight and hearing, sense and touch,
That I may see Thee working in the whole
Visible element Thou hast made so well :
May feel Thy power in the tiger's clutch
And see new heavens builded by a mole.

TRANSFIGURATION

'Nature has no Supernatural, and dissolves: Imagination is Eternity.'

NO will of flesh,
 Nor strong compulsion of the mind
 Can break the tangled mesh
 Or raise the blind
 That hides the embodied spirit from itself.
 We strive—and fail :
 We grasp the rose with hands fevered by lust,
 And lo, the drooping head grows pale,
 The petals fall,
 And wrought to agony we see our all
 Turn to a little dust,
 A little powdered dust that any wind
 May blow away and leave no trace behind.

But strong assurances there are for those
 Who love the embodied spirit of the rose :
 Who with its living beauty claim a part :
 Who dye their blood with colour from its heart :

Who let the odour of its exhaled scent
 Call forth the spirit's fragrance in them pent :
 Who in the curve of every petal feel
 Body's perfection through the senses steal.

By these and by no other means
 The soul revisiteth those scenes
 Where it may know as it is known
 And never feel itself alone.

And some there be
 Who, fenced with time, walk in eternity;
 An everlasting sacrament they hold,
 Being themselves in such attuned accord
 With all the beauty that their eyes behold
 They know their lord
 In majesty of heaven-commanding power,
 In radiant splendour of eternal truth,
 When the poor loveless crowd beholds his hour
 As one for scorn or ruth.

For most, the rugged mountain side ere they
 Behold the perfect day.
 With lonely truth they needs must toil alone
 Ere they can know as they are known;
 And suffering sense cries out against the slope,

‘Oh woeful loss of strength and time
Over this weary endless climb,
Only to grope
In clouds where truth is hidden from our gaze!
Flesh wastes in pain,
Can there be any gain
For this discipleship, to crown our days?’

Then on the summit comes the sudden blaze,
And heart that did with mind so long contend,
And faith that ’gainst experience did expend
Its slackening strength,
Suddenly and at length
Behold the prismic colours glow
In one white radiance they know
For consummation of desire,
Intelligence, and that deeper fire,
That central core of truth which lies
Hidden in the dream that never dies,
Though every precedent event
Strove to set up its monument
And stand, a living marble tomb,
Over the soul’s unopened womb.

Ah, happy they
Whose eyes are strong to see that cloudless day
Which never fades away
While with its growing glory we are one;
But miserable those
Who clutch the opening rose
And with an altar seal the just-begun.
The eternal moment lives
For him who ever gives
The eternal rose his heart's eternal sun.

TO DREAMERS

‘ Everything possible to be believ’d is an image of truth.’

O H wistful souls that lift your eyes
To shadows on the brightening skies
And there behold the radiant host
Of friends who understand you most,
Whose thoughts unspoken come to you
More easily than dropping dew,
Whose eyes are clear from sorrow’s bane,
Whose every act is glorious gain
Being the heart’s great enterprise
Made manifest to seeing eyes,
Who live in peace and love and ease
And are immune from that disease
Which checks the swift impulsive blood
And saps the current from the flood—
That mortal malady of heart
Which for itself retains a part
And will not let you show your whole
Burning inviolable soul—

That self-mistrust which still forbids
The widest lifting of the lids
To any but the dream-formed throng
To whom you really do belong :—
Oh wistful souls, I too have known
Your longing. You are not alone.
Nay, though you push me from your thought
And dream again, I too have sought
In that blind land of heart's desire
The hidden fount, the heart of fire,
And seen as in a mirror clear
My last and ultimate hope draw near.

But now no more I watch the host;
They fade, as waking speeds the ghost
Of dream-enchanted joy or pain;
The golden-linked invisible chain
No more encircles me; I run
And see the host in everyone.
Yet O, sweet wistful souls, your eyes
Look not in vain on Paradise,
For every dream that lives in you
Time or Eternity makes true.

YOUTH'S CRY

'The days of my youth rise fresh in my mind,
My face turns green and pale.'

HOW shall I learn? Where shall I find
The precepts of Love's heavenly way?
Who can these cerements unbind
That fetter me both night and day?

With fearful, curious eyes I read
Words writ in cold unfeeling blood;
But they were serpents in my head,
And I was like a thief of mud.

For all the honey lore I sought
Became an acid to my taste,
And I was like to one who brought
The chalice forth for drunken waste.

My fearful eyes could only see
Negations of the truth I craved,
And Love's sweet face was hid from me :
I only saw her form enslaved.

My curious wit I now abhor :
Knowledge accurst is all I gained.
Over the bones of Love I pore ;
My wisdom is but wisdom feigned.

For no one ever loved me well
Enough to teach my waking heart
Love's burning characters to spell
With such delight I could not start.

Let me forget, forget, forget
This skeleton within my mind !
Haply ere I am all regret
Some one these grave clothes will unwind.

Sweetheart to be, you can't destroy
The inhuman form I now behold ;
But you will teach me truth and joy
When living knowledge you unfold.

THE INCARNATE WORD

'First the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul, is to be expunged.'

IF man can speak his mind,
What of his soul?
Whose voice is never heard
Save as he find
Spirit and flesh speak whole
The incarnate word.

What language hast thou learned
Body of mine?
Speaks thy voice sweet as one
Who hath discerned
'Twixt tone and tone how fine
The modulations run?

Or art thou as a clod,
With tongue as coarse
As thy half-uttered thought?
So that e'en God
Must guess from sounds so hoarse
Their true purport.

List how these bodies shout !
 This brazen tongue
Pain to Love's soul doth bring,
 Until she flout
Those she would dwell among
 Could they but sing.

O form so long despised !
 So long enslaved !
To ignorance enchained,
 By shame disguised !
To thee I have behaved
 With cruelty ingrained.

But Love shall set thee free,
 Thy voice to hear ;
Thy native eloquence
 Unloosed shall be,
And thou shalt weep no more with stammering fear
 For thy defence.

THE BOWMAN

'The cherub with his flaming sword is hereby commanded to leave his guard at the tree of life; and when he does, the whole creation will be consumed and appear infinite and holy, whereas it now appears finite and corrupt.

This will come to pass by an improvement of sensual enjoyment.'

HE is my archer who can bend the bow
 In one clean arc stretching from head to toe;
 Who, with untrembling hands and rooted stance,
 Makes fly the shaft, nor prays for happy chance.

His bow he knows, ay, and his arrow too;
 His bow he loves, bending it he doth woo,
 And when he lets the happy arrow fly
 I hear the bow breathe out a joyful sigh.

With what calm rapture does he draw the string!
 Methinks the bow slowly begins to sing,
 Till to the arrow's very tip it bends.—
 Long has the arrow flown ere the song ends.

He is my archer who, with perfect choice,
Finds out the bow his strong arm makes rejoice,
And will not let the fretful arrow go
Until it springs from a great-bellied bow.

Not of the hireling conscript crew is he
Who doth excel in heavenly archery;
The sovereign Lord all men must serve or die
Has for my bowman no vindictive eye.

But shameful slaves who ever seek excuse
For their high service, and who do abuse
Unto the King's sweet bows and arrows, lo!
The sovereign Lord makes them in chains to go.

Their bows they fear; themselves their arrows pierce;
Having no strength their archery is fierce;
Their trembling fingers cannot hold the string;
Their disappointed arrows have no wing.

Behold cracked bows and bow-strings deathly slack,
Blunt-headed arrows, shafts that feathers lack!
These slaves have wounds where arrow-heads lie deep,
And loud they curse their wounds, or idly weep.

O Lord of Bowmen, may we learn thine art
With hands that shall obey the joyful heart :
May every bow be sacred to thy name,
And every arrow prove a flying flame.

And thou, my archer, cease not to rejoice,
Though slaves and idlers mock thy constant choice ;
For if in such an art thou dost excel
Thou hast achieved all heaven, and conquered hell.

A LAMENT OVER THE BODY OF A NUN

‘Thou art a Man: God is no more:
Thine own Humanity learn to adore,
For that is My spirit of life.’

‘Then was the serpent temple form’d, image of infinite,
Shut up in finite revolutions, and man became an Angel,
Heaven a mighty circle turning, God a tyrant crown’d.’

I

COLD, cold it lies,
Beauty’s last work, Creation’s highest deed;
Closed are the eyes
That looked so often on another’s need
But could not see their own;
Still are the limbs
That, were they wrought by human hands in stone,
Men would sing hymns
Praising the art that made such beauty known;
While priests and all religious men would say,
‘In His own image did God make our clay,
Therefore the human form in stone or paint
Merits the admiration of a saint.’

O God, blind eyes unseal.

Make hearts of stone to feel.

Stem Thou the tide which carries out to sea
The forms of Thine incarnate deity.

II

Dear tender hands

That have so often loosed another's bands
But with thine own didst struggle to the end,
With passionate life you tremble now no more,
But clasped upon your breast at last defend
The heart that lived defenceless of its store.

III

No eye hath ever seen

The full-faced beauty of this heavenly rose.

The grave's blind jaws stretch wide,
And with this form we feed them ere they close.

O Rose of Sharon ! or ever thou wast green
 Death's lily grew on every side
 And shut thee in from mortal care,
 From earthly love and that oblation
 Which springs from human adoration :
 Only from the sun thou couldst not hide,
 Into His face thine eyes looked wide ;
 O Sun ! fierce Sun ! was not Thy blossom fair ?

Yea, for methinks on many a summer's eve
 When to thy lonely cell thou didst repair,
 The sun's red level rays beheld thee there
 Clean of all cerements Death strove to weave ;
 His ardent eye looked through the narrow chink
 And on thy naked loveliness would gaze,
 While thou, suffused with glory, then wouldst drink
 Soul-deep the amorous blaze.
 But standing in that sunset glow
 Down burning cheeks the hot tears flow,
 And like a trembling leaf thy body is.
 Still to the west thy face is turned,
 Towards his light thy soul has yearned,
 And knowingly thy cheeks receive his kiss.

When suddenly, on either side
 Trance-like thine arms are lifted wide
 And deepening hues of eventide
 Reveal—O pain!—light's overflowing flood
 Transfixing thee, a living cross of blood!

VI

But now thy face is calm and ashen pale;
 No more the hesitant lines contract thy brow;
 Life's long perplexity is as a tale
 Told and forgotten—all is simple now.
 Lips that were wont to laugh or droop in pain
 Smile with the calm of twilight after rain,
 And proud and straight the knees that bent
 For prayer or for admonishment;
 O lowly body, Death hath restored thy pride.

V

Twice-closèd eyes,
Look you upon your Lover as His bride?
Impatient eyes that were so loth to scan
Deity upon earth revealed in man,
 Has life grown clear?
 Comes He more near,
He whom thy fierce heart tore from out the skies?

Yea Life, swift reparation must thou make,
For not by earth's denials art thou hedged.
Narrow the bowl that to our lips we take—
On earth some soar, but as the newly fledged.
Broad is the stream of our eternal life—
Wide is the space wherein our wings grow strong;
And though all earth with living death grow rife,
Heaven shall to Life repair the faithless wrong.

VI

O ye, all ye who scoff that one should weep
Over the self-immured, self-crucified,
 Look on this empty breast
 That might have been the nest
Into whose warmth young loveliness would creep;
 Gaze on these parted lips
 Whose kisses Death still sips,
And say, is't thus your God is glorified?
 Think, think into this flesh,
 And say, does God refresh
His deity in streams of life denied?

 'Nay,' ye replied,
'But sacrifice is ever meet for those
Who unto God would dedicate their all;
And since in this dear child God plainly chose
A bride who answered swiftly to His call,
 What wild unruly tongue
 Shall cry, "God hath done wrong"?
For spiritual bliss such sacrifice is small.'

VII

God, who is life and light,
 Out of forebeing's night
 Created earth and crowned His work with man.

In every pulse of human vein
 The Everlasting lives, showing again
 The loveliness and order of His plan;
 For, like the perfect artist, He
 In His creation dies, and we

Live as He lives
 In us, Who gives
 This seal to endless ageless strife afresh—
 His living presence manifest in flesh.

Whence whoso sacred flesh despises,
 Than God's another plan devises,
 And makes oblation to the Eternal Void.

He wars against the living God:
 On Love's still-breathing heart hath trod;
 He worships night creation hath destroyed.

O lie of lies!
 That fain would push God back into the skies
 And make earth's holocaust His sacrifice.

VIII

Sweet spirit, fled
From this most piteous bed,
I do thee wrong with querulous words to speak;
But yet thy boundless pity will forgive,
For earth hath lost its power on thee to wreak
More grievous pain,
And lo, I live
'Mid those who seek to crucify again.

Where all is well,
There, thou dost dwell,
In life and light eternally new born.
For thee no more this fitful knell;
Lady, until the eternal morn,
Farewell.

THE BATHER

‘Dip him in the river who loves water.’

B ATHE where the water gushes from the spring ;
Yea, all encumbering garments lay aside,
And naked in the sunlight leap and sing ;
Poise, and then deep into the water glide.

O graceful swimmer, thou hast all my praise ;
Thou dost not gasp upon the shallow verge,
Nor, in a frenzy, strike a thousand ways,
Fearing the head once dipped will ne’er emerge.

Now deep thou divest out of sight : anon
Thy laughing limbs upon the surface splash.
Now seemest thou to ride as doth a swan,
Now like a fish thou canst the water thrash.

Ay, gentle swimmer, yet if thou shouldst cease
From loving combat : shouldst thou bid the tide
To buoy thee up in an indulgent ease :
Sustain thee, void of energy, in pride ;

Then corpse-like on the surface thou must float,
Or swifter than the unskilled swimmer drown.
The hog in water madly rends his throat;
Water gives smile for smile, and frown for frown.

What radiant health is thine, O splendid form !
Fair son of Aphrodite, child of mirth !
And O, around thee, what a chattering swarm
Of shivering waders, swimmers of no worth.

This water, that to thee is fount and life,
Delight, renewal, joy and liberty :
To them is furtive lure and loathèd strife,
That finds and leaves them neither bond nor free.

EVE IN EDEN

‘How does he surround him
 With cold floods of abstraction, and with forests of solitude,
 To build him castles and high spires, where kings and priests may
 dwell ;
 Till she who burns with youth, and knows no fixed lot, is bound
 In spells of law to one she loathes.’

LONELY am I. I walk these pleasant meads
 And wander by the river every day,
 Culling fresh flowers to deck with fresh delight
 The arbour where I woke in wonderment ;
 But I am lonely. Yes, it may no more
 Be hid with smiles, or stilled by self-reproach ;
 The full-faced sun this shadow cannot blanch,
 The moon but makes it deeper. Every morn
 I urge myself to rise up pure and glad,
 Casting the widow-weeds of yesterday
 Behind me, as an opening flower its sheath ;
 But, ere the noon, I am shut up again.
 I wander forth and give the beasts their names :
 I nurse the furry cubs and feed the lambs,
 Run with the tigers, laugh at gambolling bears,

Or ride upon the horned rhinoceros ;
 But always when I pause or think alone
 The heavy shadow creepeth over me.
 Upon the emerald carpet of the grass
 It lays its blue-grey blight. Upon the hills,
 That turn to mounts of sapphire at sunset,
 The shadow stalks and washes out the hue.
 It makes the song of birds a clamorous din :
 The melody of heaven-ascending lark
 A distant wayward piping of despair :
 The solemn silver pageantry of night
 A ghostly company of pale regrets.—

Why art thou sad, my heart, why art thou sad?
 Stay thee : yea stand, and to thyself speak truth.
 Is not the loneliness of lonely hours
 Light as a leaf, transparent as a veil,
 Matched with the thick and heavy-shrouding pall
 That covers thee when thou shouldst be least lone?
 Thine own self-entertainment sad may be,
 But his?

O Adam, King of men, be king of me :
 Lift up a kingly head and I will bow ;
 Make me thy queen, thy comrade of delight,
 And I will be thy slave, thy little child,
 Thy mother, brother—yea, I will be all ;

But take the heavy casket of my heart—
That heaped with treasure fain would burst the
hinge—

And empty all its jewels upon thee.
Then shall I know thee truly as thou art
And no more live from glimpse to passing glimpse,
A mote in sunbeams, nay I shall be thine,
Thy strong tower in the day, and in the night
A well of joy, a mighty cleft in the rock.

Ah that it were! But me he seems to fear,
And I grow lonely. And he knows it not.
Could I but speak and tell him all my heart
Might we together tear this shadowy veil
And gain the happy sunshine of our youth?
Ah, no, no, no! He would not understand,
For he is kind, and thinks I nothing lack;
And shall I beg what he hath not to give?

Then get thee gone, faint heart! What, dost
thou wait

Upon another to fulfil thyself?
Lo, from henceforth, I, Eve, am what I am.
No more as suppliant do I wait and wait
For that fulfilment of all joy I know
The Lord God made my nature to achieve;
No more hold out my beggarly hands and cry,

'Till thou give all, all other gifts are naught.'
O whimpering girl, praying for kindly love,
Seal up thy tears, and show thyself a queen.
Thou seekest joy, then by thine own strong soul,
Thine own clear mind and deeply purposed heart,
Go forth and take thy joy by sovereign right.
Only be strong, and let not sickly qualms
Of pale remembrance keep thee from thy quest,
Tossing thy feverish heart 'twixt now and then
Like one who wakes at sunrise to bemoan
The languorous glow of clouds at eventide.
Yet—yet—the days were sweet when first I woke
And did mistake thy slumbering face for God's;
Even thy rebuke checked not my singing heart,
And I did lave my fingers in thy curls
And tell thee faith should make me God for thee,
Laughing the while in rippling waves of mirth,
That broke upon my lips with tears and smiles
Because they came from ocean depths of joy.
Then thou didst smile, and say that I was fair,
And thou wouldst ever love me for that cause.
Whereon for very love my heart nigh brake;
And like an o'ercharged cup it overflowed
To every living thing in heaven and earth;
For all my soul lay in thine arms that night.

I cried for thine, but ah, thou hadst not faith;
 I was but Eve to thee, God's handiwork,
 The pleasure of thine eye, thy body's ease,
 The ministrant to thy necessity:
 Yea, I, who could have clasped thee soul to soul.

O wherefore lacked'st thou faith? Seemed I
 too rapt,

Or hot, or cold, or palely indifferent,
 When all my nature stretched out arms for thee
 In lovely adoration and delight?
 O Adam love, did I not wait for thee,
 Defying shame and all the imps of fear
 In faith that thou wouldst yet discover me?
 What held thee back? What maggot in the rose
 Devoured the hidden heart of our delight?—
 Behold, I see! It was the fear of God.
 To Him alone thine inmost self is bound.
 He calls, and thou dost answer. When I called—
 O God, how piteously!—thy heavy ears
 Heard naught but echoes of His laws for thee;
 And when I looked thou thoughtest on His face.
 Then do I know my shadow. Ha! 'Tis clear.
 In the cool of the day He walks with thee, my lord,
 While I seek beasts for my companionship;
 And when He is weary with thee, then to me

Even as to His shadow dost thou come,
 His thoughts filling thy mind, His radiance
 Worn like a garb of saving sanctity :
 While I, child Eve, dear, gentle, helpmate Eve,
 May wait upon thy wants, and do thy will
 In lowliest obedience, asking naught.
 Fair equitable mode ! My generous lord !
 Dost thou enjoy His shadow every night?—
 Cobwebs and filth ! Look Thou, my Shadow, now,
 From henceforth, yea, even from this self-same hour
 Into substantialities we grow ;
 The pall of this indifference no more
 Shall wrap him round with clouds I cannot pierce,
 And make a murky midnight of my day ;
 Nor shall I be to him, whene'er Thou wilt,
 A shadowy reminiscence of his God.
 Now comes the hour to choose 'twixt heaven and
 earth,
 And you, lord Adam, may you wisely choose ;
 For there is one—'Serpent' thou callest him—
 Whose love unborrowed bides no God's dictates,
 Whose arms are strong to bind in mortal clasps,
 Whose passion is not neither hot nor cold :
 And should he call, thy voice may wail in vain.

THE CHILD OF LIGHT

'Sons and Daughters

To live in thy Bosom's translucence as in an eternal morning.'

O WOMAN, wouldst thou bear a child?
 O man, wouldst thou a father be?
 See that thou art not sense beguiled,
 But fear sense infidelity.

For on the topmost crown of love
 Shall thy triumphant child be born,
 When the sun lifts his head above
 All doubt of night, and shows the morn.

Of lesser lights do thou refuse
 The temptings to be self-bereft,
 They lure to paths thou soon wilt lose,
 Their lightning but discovers theft.

A flash : then darkness : then the rain,
 The lonely night, the unknown way ;
 And in thine arms a child is lain :
 Thy child, thou say'st ; but he is fay.

For though the heavens should blaze with light
And morning all thy heart reveal,
Thou canst not see the child aright,
Nor his unwitting secret steal.

And though from Heaven a god should speak
The two-fold myst'ry to declare,
Upon thine ears his words fall weak;
Thy child is neither earth nor air.

But when the slow-ascending sun
With growing light fills earth and sky :
When with the morning thou art one,
Then thy deliverance is nigh.

Then self casts off its nighted shroud,
Then joyful knowledge wakes to wed :
Love stains with glory e'en the cloud,
And makes the earth a marriage bed.

Him thou dost know, the increasing light,
As thou of him art truly known,
Till mutual love gains perfect sight,
Whence comes the child that is thine own;

Whose soul thy rich heart understands
Whether alike or unlike thine;
For if unlike it but demands
That thine imagination shine,

And lo, the power that once made clear
Thine own beloved's heart to thee,
Is strong to understand him here,
One with thee, indivisibly.

THE HIDDEN HEART

'Oh, did I close my treasures with roofs of solid stone
And darkened all my palace walls with envying and hate?'

LET me grow young as I grow old;
For Love, too long, I do confess,
My fearful heart beneath the fold
Of gaudy and dissembling dress
Has hidden lain,
Where all in vain
I miserly concealed my happiness.

I hid my heart for fear
Some robber should come near
To steal my heart and show my pauper state.
I buried it, and when one came
Who on my heart had any claim
I showed my wit in self-concealed debate;
And as that failed
Angry I grew and inly wailed,
'My pride shall yet force his to abdicate.'

Thus old and all mistrustful did I grow,
And if I sought my heart I could not find it :
 Indeed I could not show
 The napkin that did bind it;
But thou didst come, dear Love, and dig it up,
 Restoring it to me and saying,
'Behold, this is thyself, and this obeying
Thou shalt no longer sip the lee-stained cup
Of self-mistrustful life, but lo, the more
 Of this cup thou dost drink
 So much the more
Upon its lips shall crystal bubbles wink.'

Thus with my heart I friendly grew;
But oh, alas, our friendship is but new,
And often still I do present
To life some other element,
 Saying, 'Will this not do?'
E'en while I know 'tis cold and nothing true.

So to Thee, Love, I pray,
My cunning take away
And more and more teach me the way to show,
Nor wit, nor skill,
Nor pride, nor prudent fear,
Nor any other ill
The recreant holdeth dear,
But only that young heart Thyself doth know.

So shall I leave old age behind
And Thy immortal youngness find.

THE UNDERTAKERS

‘He who respects the infant’s faith
Triumphs over Hell and Death.’

I HEARD a cry at midnight loud,
‘O do not, do not make my shroud !
I see bright joys on every hand,
I do not seek the better land.’

And I beheld a living maid
By both her parents firmly laid
Within a coffin, while a nun
Said many times, ‘Thy will be done.’

I saw a fool go grinning by,
Who said, ‘The Cross is ever nigh.
The fruit of sin in this we see ;
Now who’s for saints and jollity?’

And then I saw an angel burst
That hideous coffin lid accurst.
He said, ‘Be fruitful and enjoy
The love of some bright happy boy.’

Like birch leaves shimmering 'neath the moon,
Like silvery waves at brightest noon,
Like blue-bells on a windy day,
The merry maiden danced away.

The nun said, 'Save us, Lord, from sin.
How fair the coffin she was in!'
The fool said, 'Bless my soul! Alack!
No matter; white's the same as black.'

THE DAWN OF DAY

‘Let the Priests of the Raven of dawn no longer, in deadly black,
with hoarse note curse the sons of joy.’

ANGELS and devils saw I once
Fighting in heaven.
The devils were innumerable,
The angels, seven.

Seven shafts of light they held
That pierced the sky;
But the massed army rattled shields,
Thundering horribly.

‘We hold all heaven,’ they yelled,
‘Break up their darts;
Shall immemorial darkness yield
To milky hearts?’

‘Before Time was we were,
God is less old.
Hie you pale-livered ones
Back to your fold!’

‘You cry “Love’s Light!” Begone!

The moon is here.

Her gentle, decorous ways

To us are dear.

‘She heats no fevered blood,

She comes and goes.

She loves the lily well,

But hates the rose.

‘And ye would have the rose

Grow twice as red,

Till all the earth became

One flower bed :

‘A wilderness of flowers

Praising your God :

Ay, even lascivious blooms

On Aaron’s rod.

‘While we would have the earth

As clean as she;

White as the shroud of death,

From sin as free.’

But the seven shafts were loosed,
 They cleft night's hosts,
And gibbering devils fled
 With pale moon ghosts,

Crying, 'Alack! Alack!
 Lo! Love is free.
Now will the earth bring forth
 Its infamy.'

Then robed in dazzling gold
 The Lord of Love
Lifted his kingly head
 Earth's rim above;

And swift the rosy earth
 Was like a bride
Waiting her Lord of Life,
 With arms stretched wide.

CRUCIFIXION

‘ Does spring hide its joy
When buds and blossoms grow? ’

TELL me, ye birds that mate in season due
Nor blush for shame to sport your honest love,
When shall man do
As well as you,
Ceasing from pride which thinks itself above
Your wild-wood love?

Man labours to get gain
When he should woo.
Sweet love turns to sour pain;
What shall man do?
To rid himself of love turned to distress,
Like Judas doth he kiss his happiness.

At night, with legal emissaries round,
Kissing for gain!
Whence it doth come he buys his burial ground,
While Love is slain :
Crucified ’twixt two thieves, themselves a-dying.—
Love shall arise; for them is endless lying.

O Lord of Love, when shall thy dictates be
Our hearts' desire, our key of liberty?

All thy commands in bird and beast we own,
Loving fertility

Even in the moving atoms of a stone;

But thy commands in us we lightly scorn :

On Mammon wait our babes unborn :

All other gods we serve before

A casual knee

We bend to thee,

Whom ever to adore

Is life and joy and true felicity.

Purge us from self-mistrust;

Since we are dust

Let us be faithful to our earthy trust,

Nor with indifferent lust

Make of our heavenly light the fires of hell.

Oh set us wholly instinct-free,

That like the birds and beasts we dwell

In sweet unquestioned liberty,

Freed from the anguish

Of those who languish

In self-confined and self-consuming flames,

Preferring aught before thy Name of names.

THE HOLY LAND

'As the caterpillar chooses the fairest leaves to lay her eggs on,
so the priest lays his curse on the fairest joys.'

O GARDEN without hedge or fence,
O Eden of divine content,
O Holy Land of innocence,
O Paradise of ravishment.

I saw a country spreading wide,
With rivers clear, and meadows fair,
Green lawns stretched out on every side
And rich content was everywhere.

But on the borders of that land
I saw a man with evil face
Putting a fence on every hand
To shut away the holy place.

And little children thronged around
With open looks and glowing eyes,
Who, when they tried to enter, found
They were shut out by his device.

The evil-featured man had made
A heavy gateway in his fence,
And all who went inside there paid
The price of holy innocence.

The evil-featured man grew fat.
The children all grew pale and thin.
The evil man held out his hat
And said, 'Come, pay the price of sin.'

But some there were who climbed the fence
And wandered in the garden free,
But these the evil man drew hence
To brand with names of infamy.

And some would never pay the price
But always wandered round and round,
Till glowing eyes grew balls of ice
That ever furtive sought the ground.

And some with leering looks would thief
Fruits from an overhanging tree;
And some would lying stories weave
For poisoned curiosity.

Inside they ignorantly roam,
Uproot the flowers, and mar the trees;
Befoul themselves with richest loam,
And fill the garden with disease.

What are these disillusioned ones
That find the garden bare and cold?
Who is that burning man who runs
Fleeing the flames, though he is old?

Who are these beating at the gate,
Crying aloud to be set free?
To whom the evil man, 'Your state
Is hallowed unto God and me.'

These are the happy children who,
With open looks and glowing eyes,
Once came the Holy Land to view
That they might dwell in Paradise.

‘VICTIMA AMORIS’

‘The lamb misus’d breeds public strife.’

WHAT is this wild obsessive power
That cannot give but it give all?
This child full-grown within an hour :
This love that clasps as in a thrall :

This winter turned to summer’s heat :
This frenzied groping in the night :
This swift-upspringing earless wheat :
This burning fire devoid of light ?

O who shall grapple with the love
That never knew a mortal youth,
But like a rocket soared above
In one wild flight to capture truth ?

O who to sudden power was born ?
Where is the art that needs no skill ?
How slowly lift the lids of morn !
How slow comes twilight o’er the hill !

And Nature rich in skill and care
To ripeness brings her choicest fruit
Slowly, with signs which men aware
Heed, though no voice the news may bruit.

But this—this power of powers grows on
Hidden in shame, the sport of jest,
By cold discretion trodden upon,
And by religious frowns opprest;

Till wild for freedom up it springs
With tentacles where arms should be,
Which in distraction blind it flings
Around the pinions of the free.

How fearfully the ivy grips,
With iron hand in downy glove!
But O the kiss of one whose lips
Know no intelligence in love!

THE INARTICULATES

‘And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of love.’

I’VE seen them come and go,
And thought and thought again,
If they could only know
I know their hidden pain,
They, seeing it with me,
Would laugh it out of court,
And hunting pain might be
An idle summer sport.

For it’s a dismal sight
To see unspoken pain
Spreading a sickly blight
Of fear and false disdain
On one, who otherwise
Would laugh with all her heart
At all the little lies
Unspoken pain can start.

Time and again I try
To push the veil aside,
Gently, undaunted by
The motley garb of pride;
But most have worn the veil
So long they dare not lose it,
And freedom turns us pale
For fear we might abuse it.

There'll come a simpler life,
For fear has had his innings
And all this clumsy strife
Happens at all beginnings.
Heigh-ho! You'll understand,
And I shan't walk so wary.
Then we'll take pain in hand
And turn her to a fairy.

‘TELL ME THY NAME’

‘Come forth O lovely-one.’

TELL me thy name;
 My heart hath ears to hear
 That name they cannot know
 Who of thee little claim.
 Then bless me, O my Dear!
 Tell me thy name.

Thy secret name, unheard
 Of any yet:
 That one triumphant word
 Thou mayest not forget:
 Thy very self averred
 Without regret.

Destiny's self doth cry
 To hear thy name.
 He pleads in me, and I
 His title claim.
 Then, in a word, a sigh,
 Tell me thy name.

Thou canst not go,
Thy heart and mine are one,
The twain but show
Our separate lives begun.
Thy name I know.

Then beyond touch of fear,
Beyond all reach of shame,
My heart thy heart must hear,
My spirit thine doth claim.
Till thou thy glory show
I will not let thee go.
Tell me thy name.

ATONEMENT

‘Two yet but one.’

BEYOND all thought, whose swift or tangled ways
Are paths around the doorway of your heart :
Beyond the touch of sense, whose heavenly maze
Leads where the everlasting gateways part,
I stand and meet your spirit face to face
Wrapped in that white still flame of living fire
Which is the crown and summit of all desire,
Being love set free from bonds of time and space.

Here is my wholeness : here my wherefore born :
Here love and life and death no more contend :
Here faith's poor shivering garment drops out-worn,
And old contentious reason makes an end.
I die, you live. You die, I live in you,
And love and death and life make all things new.

THE IMMORTAL JOURNEY

' Each man is in his Spectre's power
Until the arrival of that hour
When his Humanity awake
And cast his Spectre into the lake.'

SEEKING a place where I might dwell,
I sent my soul to Heaven and Hell.
The bird flew to the Golden Gate,
But none could see it in mortal state,
And none could hear its mortal song,
Nor could my soul remain there long
Because the empty upper air
As weight upon its wings did bear,
And the intense light pierced its eyes,
And the intense void drowned its cries,
And for each vision that it caught
There lay behind a shadow wrought
So huge and demonical
That Heaven itself seemed gulphed in Hell;
For brighter as each vision grew
So the gap closed to see it through,
Till, though my soul dared not look back,
The last streak went, and all was black.

My soul rushed down to lowest Hell.
'Here, nothing hoping, I may dwell;
Neither alive nor wholly dead,
Here may I live, and here be fed
With pleasant thoughts of fools who turn
Their lives to hell ere they need burn,
By solving the insoluble,
And striving at the impossible,
Lacking the wit even to see
Or smile on their own futility.'

But my soul grew tired of Hell at length
Because Hell has no use for strength,
And I was strong. So back it flew
To Earth, and suddenly, I met you.
I laughed. But my laugh had no sound,
And I fell trembling to the ground.
And lying there I watched your ways
And felt the past ebb into days
When I had dreamed that I should be
The incarnate beauty I now could see
Moving like Heaven before my eyes,
Dwarfing my little self-bound lies,
Making the thing I was so small,
So shadowy, it scarce was at all.

I gazed and gazed, and was content.
Here then was the divine event,
Here was the natural miracle,
The unknown made explicable,
Humour encompassing sublime,
The eternal seen in finite time.
Here was the blaze of noonday light,
The dark enfolding wings of night,
The amplitude of arching sky
Within the cloister of an eye.—
Infinite power, infinite grace
Lay like a bloom upon your face;
Your every gesture seemed to tell
Of quakings in the courts of Hell,
And every word you spoke set free
Another gate of Liberty,
And when you smiled the humblest flowers
Knew themselves for immortal powers,
And when you walked a fool could see
Progress in every century.

I watched you, wholly content in seeing
Beauty of life have perfect being.
I watched you, feeling very old,
Yet rich beyond the dreams of gold.

You were—it was enough for me,
I looked on Immortality
And knew my dream of truth was true
Because it lived and shone in you;
And none should never say me nay,
Or tell me of some other way,
Or paint the sky, or fire the gloom,
With vapid bliss, or hopeless doom.
I, even I, had seen—did see
Living, incarnate, Deity.
A tremor shook me: tears of joy
Came as I were a little boy,
And waves of wonder through me swept,
Till, smiling in my tears, I slept.

I woke feeling your lightest kiss.
I could have cried, 'Not this, not this!
I never never could hope to give
Light wherein you could hope to live;
See, I am old, twisted and bent,
Let me stay here in this content;
To know you live is all I need,
Oh do not ask of me one deed.'
Only it suddenly came to me,
'With you, or in Non-Entity';

And though 'twas agony to rise
I loved the bidding of your eyes,
And trance-like by your beauty led
Rose from the Kingdom of the Dead.

Love, you know all : know why I write :
Know how I tremble in the light
I would diffuse, yet fear to tell
Lest my weak words should break the spell :
Hide what they would unveil, and be
Themselves in all their poverty.
But, O you Words ! look not to me,
Look on my Love, then you will see
Why you should come like happy bands
Of children bearing in their hands
The garlands of immortal song,
That to herself, in truth, belong.
And you, Love, you will take away
Fear lest I walk with feet of clay :
Will break the self-reflecting glass
And bring the marvellous to pass :
Teach me how simple it is to reveal
Visions, if visions be but real,
And not some phantasy of mind
Constructed when the soul is blind ;

For I have but to feel you near
For the gigantic to appear
A light thing, making no demand;
And when I feel you urge this hand
It writes, the while I look on you,
And what is written then is true.

But by what labyrinthine ways
You led me : how did you erase
The furrowed lines of self-mistrust,
The self-devouring pain of lust
Which ignorantly seeks its own
And buys a halter with a throne,
The fear of fate, the rust of care,
The loneliness that from its lair
Would leap and have me in such fright
Smug saint or devil were welcome sight :
How you did this, I cannot trace,
My sweet compelling means of grace.

And now? Hush ! Who hath ears to hear?—
I come into your presence, Dear,
And gazing in your blessed eyes
The last thin rags of self-disguise
Fall, fall away, and naked, I,

Into your life eternal, die,
 And with an equal rapture give
 You my eternal life to live :
 My life for yours, and yours for mine,
 In timeless interchange divine.
 O death triumphant ! All is gone !
 Selfhood in beauty clothed upon !
 Your heart I feel : with your eyes see :
 To me is nothing left of me,
 But you reincarnate the whole
 And of our souls is born our soul.

Fleeter than fleetest wind that flies,
 Lighter than air, we dance the skies.
 In every living love on earth
 We have a part in our new birth,
 With new-born selves made wholly free
 Since self itself has ceased to be.—
 The weight of individual life,
 The restlessness of civil strife,
 The invisible speck of secret shame,
 The unspoken syllable of blame,
 Vanish like dewdrops—those bright tears
 That glisten on the cheeks of day
 When fresh with sleep her face appears

And 'neath her smiles they fade away.
We smile and weep for very joy,
And lightest nothings we employ
Heart's simple rapture to express,
Where once Love's single-heartedness
Laboured in travail to reveal
The express image of her weal.

And now swing back those Gates immense
That guard the Fields of Innocence;
Unclothed we boldly enter in
With single conscience, void of sin;
Our nakedness we cannot see
Now flesh owns its divinity;
Living in one another's forms
How could we know Shame's awful storms?
Love sings where Shame was wont to dwell,
And Heaven redeems the hosts of Hell.
The Angel of the two-edged sword
Welcomes us to the holy sward,
And Eden's bowers of holy bliss
Are built to hide us when we kiss.
The Tree of Knowledge tempts us not,
Its double meanings are forgot;
But lo! the Tree of Life spreads wide

Its bending boughs on every side;
Beneath its shadow we will sit
And eat the luscious fruit of it;
And there beside us flows the stream
Of Love's divine and endless dream.

‘ They said this mystery never shall cease :
The priest promotes war, and the soldier peace.’



THE GODDESS OF WAR

'I am drunk with unsatiated love; I must rush again to War.'

CLAD in all regal splendour forth she rides
Upon a jet-black horse champing the curb,
While loud huzzas the pendant air disturb,
Since in her breast a nation's hope abides.
Behold, the King and God she claims for guides!
And Justice too—come thou and hate the Serb!
And men and angels, laud ye the superb
Majesty which in her peerless form resides!

Yet look again. Her eyes are balls of fire.
Her scarlet robe is bright with human gore.
Where'er she moves, ashes spring from the dust.
Truth saith: She taketh souls of men for hire
And burneth them in fires of their own lust:
That she is Self's own self-appointed whore.

July, 1914.

THE GOD OF WAR

‘Let all Indefinites be thrown into Demonstrations.’

PASS, unknown monster, pass; the dawn of mind
 Reveals thy lineaments. Ere break of day
 Men saw thee as a cloud for the display
 Of Heaven’s lightning, Heaven’s rushing wind;
 They worshipped thee in fear and reverence blind,
 Hanging about thine altars banners gay,
 Beating loud drums, wreathing thy priests with bay,
 And dancing at the murder of mankind.

No more we watch thy great foreboding shape
 Sprawled on the darkened heavens. Instead we see
 One soldier disembowelled by butchery,
 One girl-wife, now a living shroud of crape;
 ‘And in the thinking sight of these we cry,
 ‘Spawn of our lust and hatred, thou shalt die.’



August, 1914.

SIROCCO

'Terror in the house does roar ;
But Pity stands before the door.'

' . . . and the leaves of the tree were for the healing
of the nations.'

O DAYS of horror, days of grief !
The unbridled winds of scourging strife
Have swept the nations' healing leaf
From off the shadowy Tree of Life.

Wafted toward death's bitter flood
The healing leaves of pity ride,
Borne on a river veined with blood,
Wasted upon a swirling tide.

While through the restless aching boughs
Wrath glares with pitiless burning eyes,
And ever as the tempest soughs
The fearful groans of torment rise.

O days of terror, days of pain !
When shall the Tree put forth her shoots?
When shall her leaves give shade again,
And healing sap rise from her roots?

October, 1914.

WHEN IT'S OVER

' For war is energy enslaved.'

'YOUNG soldier, what will you be
When it's all over?'

'I shall get out and across the sea,
Where land's cheap and a man can thrive.
I shall make money. Perhaps I'll wive
In a place where there's room for a family.
I'm a bit of a rover.'

'Young soldier, what will you be

At the last "Dismiss"?''

'Bucked to get back to old Leicester Square,
Where there's good champagne and a glad eye winking,
And no more Verey Lights damnably blinking
Their weary, dreary, white-eyed stare.
I'll be out of this.'

‘Young soldier, what will you be

When they sign the peace?’

‘Blowed if I know; perhaps I shall stick it.

The job’s all right if you take it steady.

After all, somebody’s got to be ready,

And tons of the blighters ’ll get their ticket.

Wars don’t cease.’

‘Young soldier, what will you be

At the day’s end?’

‘Tired’s what I’ll be. I shall lie on the beach

Of a shore where the rippling waves just sigh,

And listen and dream and sleep and lie

Forgetting what I’ve had to learn and teach

And attack and defend.’

‘Young soldier, what will you be

When you’re next a-bed?’

‘God knows what; but it doesn’t matter,

For whenever I think I always remember

The Belgians massacred that September,

And England’s pledge—and the rest seems chatter.

What if I *am* dead?’

'Young soldier, what will you be

When it's all done?'

'I shall come back and live alone

On an English farm in the Sussex Weald,

Where the wounds in my mind will be slowly sealed,

And the graves in my heart will be overgrown;

And I'll sit in the sun.'

'Young soldier, what will you be

At the "Last Post"?' .

'Cold, cold in the tender earth,

A cold body in foreign soil;

But a happy spirit Fate can't spoil,

And an extra note in the blackbird's mirth

From a khaki ghost.'

April, 1915.

POISONING THE WELLS

‘ Ah! are there other wars, beside the wars of sword and fire!’

NOT for the raging strife, the glowing hate
 That like a forest fire to murder burns,
 And round its hapless victims snake-like turns
 For loathlier means of death at hell’s dictate,
 Do I indict thee, man-made monstrous fate!
 Nay, I rejoice; for herein man discerns
 Glory of war but dust in dusty urns,
 As by her spawn Lust grows articulate.

But darker guilt is thine; for now we walk
 Two sexed, and one is hunter, one is lure.
 ’Tis thine to make the blood of Eve impure
 And set her singing siren songs again;
 While heady man to woman plays the hawk,
 And Love, grown wild, conceives to bring forth Pain.

May, 1915.

ANOTHER CALL TO ARMS

(To R.C.G.)

'The roaring of lions, the howling of wolves, the raging of the stormy sea, and the destructive sword are portions of eternity too great for the eye of man.'

TAKE up your arms, my soldier.—
 You were not meant to fight,
 For Loveliness has given to you
 Her spirit of delight;

And you have fought with demons
 These armies never knew;
 The direst enemies of life
 Have been afraid of you;

And while through sloth and weakness
 Men let the monsters loose,
 You fought for life's great loveliness
 And sought life's perfect use.

Yet now from your high mountain
 I bid you wend your way
 To dip your hands in carnage,
 And like death's hireling, slay.

And now you stand and tremble,
Now Terror gapes at you
Whom Courage never offered
A task that you could do.

Take up your arms, my soldier;
No cross of wood is yours,
Before you reach Gethsemane
Blood from your spirit pours.

And you shall die, my soldier,
The day you swear to kill.
Take up your arms, my soldier,
And do it with a will.

For in your weakest brother
Your soul must find a place;
Now for that greater selfhood
Your little self efface.

The nations move as children
And you must be a child.
Take up your arms, my soldier,
Nor think your soul defiled.

Liberty in her travail
Has pains too deep for thought,
And many skeins are tangled
Ere Fate's design is wrought.

Die on the cross, my soldier,
Nor pray the cup pass by;
For he shall rise transfigured
Who knows the hour to die.

June, 1915.

THE DEAD SOLDIERS

'God only Acts and Is in existing beings or Men.'

I

SPECTRUM Trench. Autumn. Nineteen-Sixteen.
And Zenith. (The Border Regiment will remember.)

A little north of where Lesboeufs had been.
(The Australians took it over in December.)
Just as the scythe had caught them, there they lay,
A sheaf for Death, ungarnered and untied :
A crescent moon of men who showed the way
When first the Tanks crept out, till they too died :
Guardsmen, I think, but one could hardly tell,
It was a forward slope, beyond the crest,
Muddier than any place in Dante's hell,
Where sniping gave us very little rest.
At night one stumbled over them and swore ;
Each day the rain hid them a little more.

II

Fantastic forms, in postured attitudes,
Twisted and bent, or lying deathly prone;
Their individual hopes my thought eludes,
But each man had a hope to call his own.
Much else?—God knows. But not for me the
thought,
‘Your mothers made your bodies : God your souls,
And, for because you dutifully fought,
God will go mad and make of half-lives, wholes.’
No. God in every one of you was slain;
For killing men is always killing God,
Though Life destroyed shall come to life again
And loveliness rise from the sodden sod.
But if of life we do destroy the best,
God wanders wide, and weeps in his unrest.

April, 1917.

THE TWO WORLDS

'How terrible then is the field of Death
Where he doth rend the vault of heaven
And shake the gates of hell!'

O DEATH, O Terror born of war!
You would destroy this gracious earth,
And deafen with your brazen roar
The music love can bring to birth;
But there's a sphere
You cannot hear
Singing its rapture;

My love and I compose a world you cannot capture.

We are a world complete in love,
So you may split your world in sunder:
The heavens with raving discord move,
And crack the earth with hellish thunder;

My love and I
Have but to sigh
Our heart's accord,

And lo! our world's complete—we need not speak
a word.

Rage as you will, distracting Death,
You have no power to hold us single;
Love breathes—you vanish at a breath :
You cannot part what lovers mingle.

Shout, wail and cry,

My love and I

Are not affrighted.

At this day's end we shall sleep unbenighted.

June, 1915.

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